

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LUERS/BESSMERTNYKH CONVERSATION ON BILATERAL
RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY. OVER LUNCH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS COVERED SERIES OF BILATERAL PROBLEMS WITH SOVIET EMBASSY MINISTER COUNSELOR BESSMERTNYKH. TOPICS COVERED WERE VISITS OF THE EXECUTIVE SEMINAR, THE WAR COLLEGE VISIT AND MILITARY EXCHANGES, APARTMENTS IN MOSCOW, HARRASSMENT OF EMBASSY OFFICERS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD AND THE GENERAL STATE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. EXECUTIVE SEMINAR. LUERS PROVIDED BESSMERTNYKH A LIST OF THE EXECUTIVE SEMINAR MEMBERS WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE VISIT. HE SAID THAT OUR EMBASSY IN MOSCOW WOULD BE
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RECEIVING THE SAME LIST AND PROVIDING IT TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SO THAT BESSMERTNYKH NEED NOT UNDERTAKE THAT RESPONSIBILITY. LUERS POINTED OUT THAT ONE OF THE MEMBERS WAS LISTED OPENLY AS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE CIA. BESSMERTNYKH REPLIED THAT THIS WAS A NON-ISSUE. THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT HAD RESPECT FOR THAT AGENCY AND IT WOULD BE NO PROBLEM. LUERS REQUESTED FOREIGN MINISTRY SUPPORT FOR VISIT TO

THE MINISTRY, A CALL ON THE INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (HE RECALLED AMBASSADOR LEBEDEV'S VISIT TO FSI IN 1976) AND MEETINGS WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS IN MOSCOW,

LENINGRAD AND KIEV. BESSMERTNYKH SAID THAT THE VISIT TO MFA WAS LAID ON AS WELL AS THE VISIT TO THE USA INSTITUTE. HE WAS VERY SKEPTICAL THAT THE CALL ON THE INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COULD BE WORKED OUT SINCE HE KNOWS HOW BUSY LEBEDEV IS AND HOW ACTIVE THE INSTITUTE IS DURING THE SPRING SINCE HIS DAUGHTER IS A STUDENT THERE. HE DID RECALL LEBEDEV'S VISIT TO FSI AND SAID HE WOULD MAKE AN EFFORT. ON THE QUESTION OF CALLS ON THE LOCAL OFFICIALS IN THE THREE CITIES, BESSMERTNYKH SAID HE WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE LENINGRAD AND KIEV VISITS WERE STRICTLY FOR TOURISM AND SUBSTANCE WOULD BE DEALT WITH IN MOSCOW, BUT HE WOULD ALSO RAISE THIS QUESTION WITH THE MINISTRY. LUERS, CITING HIS OWN RECENT EXPERIENCE IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD, URGED MFA SUPPORT FOR CALLS ON NATIONAL AND LOCAL OFFICIALS.

3. WAR COLLEGE AND MILITARY EXCHANGES. LUERS EXPLAINED THE RECENT SOVIET GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL THAT WE ELEVATE THE NATURE OF OUR MILITARY EXCHANGES TO INCLUDE SENIOR LAND FORCES COMMANDERS THIS YEAR, AIR FORCE OFFICERS IN 1979 AND MILITARY MUSEUM CURATORS LATER IN LIEU OF THE WAR COLLEGE VISITS. LUERS SAID THAT WE WERE INTRIGUED AND EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THE SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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EXPANDED EXCHANGES BUT BELIEVED THAT THESE SHOULD AND COULD TAKE PLACE NOT IN LIEU OF BUT IN ADDITION TO THE WAR COLLEGE VISIT. LUERS EXPLAINED THE HIGH CALIBER OF WAR COLLEGE STUDENTS AND PREDICTED THAT MOST WOULD BE DECISION MAKERS WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE. HE SAID THE CONTINUING OF THIS EXCHANGE WOULD BE BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS AND IF INDEED THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT IS NEGATIVE ON THESE EXCHANGES, WE SHOULD TALK SERIOUSLY ABOUT THIS QUESTION. LUERS ASKED THAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT MOVE AHEAD ON THE WAR COLLEGE AND AGREE TO DISCUSS SPECIFIC PROPOSALS ON THE BROADER MILITARY EXCHANGES STATING THAT, GIVEN THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR RELATIONS, IT WAS USEFUL TO EXPAND RATHER THAN DIMINISH THIS TYPE OF CONTACT. BESSMERTNYKH SAID HE WAS UNINFORMED ON THIS WHOLE ISSUE AND WOULD QUERY MOSCO'.

4. APARTMENTS. RECALLING HIS RECENT VISIT TO MOSCOW, LUERS EXPLAINED THE CONCERN OF THE EMBASSY OVER THE UPDK LACK OF RESPONSE ON THE URGENT REQUEST FOR MORE APARTMENTS. HE SAID THAT OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND YEARS THE EMBASSY WOULD HAVE TO HAVE GREATLY INCREASED LIVING QUARTERS TO COPE WITH ITS NEEDS. FAILURE TO BE

RESPONSIVE TO THESE REQUESTS WOULD NOT ONLY BE INCONSISTENT WITH THE MARCH 1977 PROTOCOL BUT WOULD MORE SERIOUSLY IMPACT ON THE ENTIRE ATTITUDE OF EMBASSY PERSONNEL TOWARD THEIR WORKING ENVIRONMENT IN MOSCOW.

LUERS REFERRED TO AN EARLIER CONVERSATION BETWEEN GARRISON AND DOBRYNIN OVER THE DIFFICULT CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH AMERICAN DIPLOMATS LIVE IN MOSCOW AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMEDIATE UPDK ACTION THAT IS NOW CONTEMPLATED ONLY FOR MAY ON OUR NEED FOR 17 NEW APARTMENTS. BESSMERTNYKH SAID THAT HE HAD SEEN A RECENT CABLE REPORTING ON EMBASSY DISCUSSIONS WITH UPDK AND UNDERSTOOD THAT WE WANTED ONLY SEVEN APARTMENTS. LUERS UNDERTOOK TO GIVE THE EMBASSY AGAIN A DETAILED RECAPITULATION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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OUR REQUESTS (WE WILL SUPPLY SUCH A PAPER TO AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN PRIOR TO HIS RETURN TO MOSCOW).

5. HARRASSMENT OF EMBASSY OFFICERS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD. LUERS DESCRIBED RECENT INCIDENTS OF CLOSE UP PHOTOGRAPHY AND SURVEILLANCE OF EMBASSY OFFICERS IN MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD INCLUDING EPISODES IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE THEIR APARTMENTS. LUERS SAID THAT THESE EPISODES BEGAN SHORTLY BEFORE HIS JANUARY VISIT TO MOSCOW AND SEVERAL SUCH INCIDENTS TOOK PLACE WHILE HE WAS IN MOSCOW. LUERS QUESTIONED RHW EWNAONA DOE AUXH XRICIRIWA NS WONDERED WHETHER THESE WERE REFLECTION OF SOVIET OFFICIAL FRUSTRATION AT THE STATE OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. BESSMERTNYKH REPLIED THAT HE HAD HEARD NOTHING OF THESE INCIDENTS AND WONDERED WHETHER THEY WERE NOT THE WORKING OF FERTILE IMAGINATIONS OF EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO WERE LOOKING FOR PROBLEMS. LUERS REPLIED FROM PERSONAL DISCUSSIONS THAT THESE SEEMED TO BE REAL EVENTS AND REQUESTED THAT BESSMERTNYKH AND THE AMBASSADOR INFORM THEMSELVES OF THESE PROBLEMS TO DETERMINE WHETHER SOME STEPS COULD BE TAKEN TO DIMINISH THESE INCIDENTS. BESSMERTNYKH SAID HE WOULD INFORM HIMSELF AND DISCUSS THE PROBLEM WITH AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN.

6. GENERAL STATE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. MUCH OF THE DISCUSSION CENTERED ON THE GENERAL PROBLEMS OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. BESSMERTNYKH SAID AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN WAS RETURNING TO MOSCOW WITH A GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC REPORT. BESSMERTNYKH SAID HE THOUGHT THAT RELATIONS WERE ON THE DECLINE. HE SAID THAT THEY HAD NOT YET REACHED "ROCK BOTTOM" BUT WERE HEADED IN THAT DIRECTION. NEITHER HE NOR THE AMBASSADOR COULD DETERMINE HOW TO CORRECT THE TREND. LUERS QUERIED BESSMERTNYKH WHETHER THERE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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ANY SPECIFIC EVENT FOR WHICH DOBRYNIN WAS RETURNING SUCH AS A GENERAL REVIEW OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS OR A PARTY DISCUSSION OF OUR PROBLEMS. BESSMERTNYKH SAID THERE WAS NO SPECIFIC EVENT BUT THAT THE CURRENT STATUS OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS WAS OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO THE LEADERSHIP.

7. CONGRESSIONAL VISITS. BESSMERTNYKH SAID THAT THE MFA HAD AGREED TO ASSIST IN THE VISIT OF THE PRICE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE AND VISITS TO THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE WERE ALREADY SET. BESSMERTNYKH SAID THAT THE EMBASSY WAS ALSO CONSIDERING A SERIES OF INVITATIONS TO ADDITIONAL SENATORS BUT THESE WERE STILL PENDING. VANCE

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